



PHILIPPINE TOBACCO NEWS

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Administrator & CEO

Belinda Sarmiento Sanchez

*First Woman
to Head the
National Tobacco
Administration*



INSIDE

Leadership that inspires better services

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New experience and vision

AS Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez came on board the tobacco regulatory agency, things are slowly returning to normal after a long bout with the COVID-19 health crisis, and the national government sees economic rebound in 2022. The roadmap of the tobacco industry, in particular, towards sustainability has been in place, awaiting full funding for all its component projects to industrialize farm production.

It was a smooth transition to NTA's new chapter, as the new Administrator will already have a clear view of the prospects of the industry and a vision of how to specifically implement initiatives that the tobacco farmers need.

It has been heartening to listen to her short inaugural speech, as she vowed in a low-key straightforward speaking style, to continue the programs and projects that have been in place by the outgoing administration, and expressed her willingness to form meaningful relationships with the employees.

While local production has performed relatively well during the pandemic, especially considering the circumstances, the new administrator is in the best position possible to step up efforts to industrialize the industry and increase the income of farmers.

The core agency business needs to be in good shape. That means providing excellent service to enrich the lives of tobacco farmers and other industry stakeholders through meaningful programs that improve productivity. It also means nurturing partnership and linkages for development and economic growth with various sectors, especially the local government units in tobacco-growing areas.

Another most urgent action to consider is the filling up of vacant plantilla positions to beef up manpower for the implementation of component projects under the industry roadmap. With her leadership, the Selection and Merit Board should think about how to keep making NTA a welcoming place for dedicated workers.

With her clean track record and administrative experience in the government fitting to her new role, there is no doubt that NTA will lead the industry in the right direction with passion and experience, and the tobacco farmers and communities can and will continue to flourish in the next five years and beyond. ■

QUICK FACTS

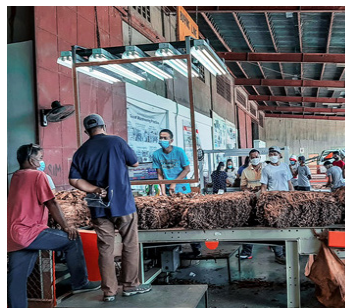
Tobacco Areas and No. of Farmers

TOBACCO TYPE	Area (ha.)	No. of Farmers	Regions
Virginia	13,657	14,936	I, 2, CAR
Burley	2,883	4,748	I, 2
Native	13,281	21,346	All regions, except NCR, Calabarzon, Bicol
TOTAL	27,649	40,572	



CY 2021-2022

Tobacco Production



43.77
Million kg

P4.24
Billion

* Regulation Data as of December 31, 2022

LGU Funds

P19 billion from the tobacco excise tax (from 2020 production), which the LGUs can use for their priority programs and projects.



Revenues for the Government

Taxes: Tobacco excise tax collections was Php148.9 billion in 2022.

Export: The industry also earns US\$619 million (2021) from exportation of manufactured/ unmanufactured tobacco.



Employment

It provides livelihood 2.1 million people, including the more than 430,000 farmers, farm workers, and the members of their family.





Sanchez

Seares

NTA turnover ceremony marks new leadership

THE National Tobacco Administration (NTA) welcomed its new Administrator and Chief Executive Officer, Belinda Sarmiento-Sanchez during the turnover ceremony held at the NTA Central Office in Quezon City on November 21. Outgoing Administrator Robert Victor G. Seares Jr. handed over the corporate flag to the new Administrator as a symbolic gesture of transfer of leadership and duties of the office.

The event was attended by top officials headed by two acting Deputy Administrators Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay (Operations) and Dinah E. Pichay (Support Services), and central office employees. Officials and staff of the Branch Offices joined the ceremony online via Microsoft Teams.

Administrator Sanchez, the first woman to head the agency, conveyed her appreciation to the NTA family for the warm welcome. She vowed to continue the programs and projects that have been in place by the outgoing leadership.

“It’s nice meeting you all. I am looking forward to meet each and every one of you. *Huwag po kayong matatakot na i-approach ako,*” she said.

Sanchez is a young achiever in the corporate arena and a seasoned Certified Public Accountant whose

expertise included analytical and cash flow planning and management.

She is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Accountancy at the University of Sto. Tomas.

Her father, Benjamin V. Sarmiento, is a former member of the NTA Governing Board, a farmer leader and a former local chief executive of San Juan, Ilocos Sur.

In his message, outgoing Administrator Seares Jr. expressed his gratitude to NTA for supporting him in his journey as head of the regulatory agency for more than two years. “I appreciate the hardwork of our employees and that’s what I did, to work harder for them and for all our tobacco farmers,” he added.

He said he is “leaving the agency in good hands” to the incoming administration.

Former Mayor Sarmiento commended the outgoing administrator for his achievements, as he enjoined the NTA family to give the same level of support to the new leadership.

Before the turnover ceremony, Administrator Sarmiento-Sanchez took her oath of office before Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin in Malacañang. ■

Text & Photos: **Andrea Marie C. Contillo**



Acting Deputy Administrator for Operations Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay (on mic) and Atty. Jun Fred V. Parado present the agency's position to the proposed legislation.

Tobacco smuggling as economic sabotage proposed

THE House Committee on Agriculture and Food, presided by Rep. Wilfrido Mark M. Enverga (1st District, Quezon), approved House Bill (HB) No. 3917, which seeks to amend the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act to include and classify cigarette smuggling as economic sabotage, on November 15, at the House of Representatives, Batasan Complex in Quezon City.

HB No. 3917, or “An Act Amending Sections 3 and 4 of Republic Act No. 10845, otherwise known as the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016 and for Other Purposes,” was principally authored by senior Deputy Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander A. Marcos (1st District, Ilocos Norte) and Rep. Margarita Ignacia B. Nograles (PBA Party list).

The proposed measure seeks to amend key provisions of Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act to include tobacco, whether manufactured or unmanufactured, and finished products such as cigars, cigarettes or heated tobacco products (HTPs), with a minimum excise tax and VAT payable in P1 million, in the coverage of large-scale agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage.

The Committee discussed the substantial losses to government's collection brought about by tobacco illicit trade and smuggling, and the important role law enforcement agencies play to deter the proliferation of these activities.

NTA, as the government's sole tobacco regulatory agency, gave its position paper to HB 3917.

Acting Deputy Administrator for Operations Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, representing NTA Administrator Robert Victor G. Seares, Jr. in the meeting, vowed the agency's strong support to the approval of the proposed measure in curbing out illicit tobacco trading or agricultural smuggling as a key component to bringing more collections to government coffers

“This is critical for our country's economic relief and recovery efforts,” Palabay said.

HB 3917 was unanimously approved upon motion of Rep. Grace Kristine Singson-Meehan (2nd District, Ilocos Sur), duly seconded by Rep. Estrellita B. Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija). **(Jun Fred V. Parado) ■**

NTA joins Better Regulations Summit 2022

NTA, together with other government regulatory agencies, attended the Better Regulations Summit 2022, organized by the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), on October 7 at the Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City.

This summit, with the theme, “Enabling Regulatory Reform Towards Bureaucratic Efficiency,” is in line with the ARTA's push to enable regulatory reforms towards bureaucratic efficiency.

NTA Regulation Department Manager Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros represented the agency on the one-day summit that launched the National Policy on Regulatory Management System (NPRMS) and the Business Processing and Licensing System (BPLS) Operations Manual.

NPRMS is a formal policy that will operationalize the Philippine Regulatory Management System to make sure all regulations are rational and do not add undue regulatory

burden and cost to the transacting public and government agencies.

The new regulatory policy aims to promote the adoption of a systematized management of regulations, provide a common framework of good regulatory practices, and establish institutional arrangements for all government offices

The BPLS manual serves as a comprehensive and user-friendly tool for local government units (LGUs) in the adoption of innovative solutions in public service delivery.

According to Atty. Ambros, the NTA under the leadership of Administrator/CEO Robert Victor G. Seares Jr., has been compliant with the call of the national government to streamline the bureaucracy to efficiently deliver services to the transacting public. ■

Administrator Sanchez inspects NTA facilities in Ilocos

Text & Photos: **Melanie Rapiz-Parel**

NTA Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez inspected two income-generating facilities in Region 1 during her first official visit to the Branch Offices in the Region and Abra on December 13-14. This is to initially assess the operational status of the facilities that were established to boost the country's tobacco industry and to bring an additional source of livelihood for the tobacco farmers.

The facilities, the Tobacco Dust Processing Plant (TDPP) in Barangay Fernando, Sto. Tomas, La Union, and the NTA Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita (formerly AgriPinoy) in Barangay Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur, are currently not fully operational.

The inspection at the tobacco dust processing plant gave Sanchez a view on the ongoing preparation of TDPP personnel for its reopening and resumption of operations. The agency is currently completing the rehabilitation of the facility after a fire inside the plant in 2018 damaged

some equipment and resulting in suspension of production.

TDPP produces Tobacco Dust Plus, an NTA brand for the dust pure tobacco formulation. The product is used as a molluscicide to control snails and other predators, and as organic fertilizer to promote the growth of *lablab*, an organic food for fishes, in fishponds.

The Administrator next visited the food processing plant in Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. The NMIS AA-accredited facility is a component of NTA's intervention program which includes a hog fattening project, poultry dressing, and the TESDA-accredited training school for slaughtering. The facility, however, was not fully operational due to the effect of swine flu in the region, affecting raw materials for processed meat products.

"It is important to facilitate the re-operationalization of the production facility of the TDPP and the NTA Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita to provide more

jobs for the people and additional source of income for the tobacco farmers," Administrator Sanchez said.

Top officials joined Administrator Sanchez in the ocular inspection of the agency facilities. They were Executive Assistant Benjamin V. Sarmiento, Acting Deputy Administrators Dinah E. Pichay (Support Services) and Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay (Operations), Department Managers Reynaldo R. Aquino (OIC Internal Audit), Atty. Rohbert A. Ambros (Regulation), Myrna O. Lozano (Industrial Research), Fortuna C. Benosa (Corporate Planning), Milagros C. Tiu (OIC Finance), Zenaida T. Arrojo (Administrative), and Atty. Jun Fred V. Parado and Minerva P. Mizal, both of the Office of the Administrator.

Nestor C. Casela, Jessie Pat M. Serna, Teofilo R. Quintal, and Danilo C. Trongco, all members of the NTA Governing Board, also joined Administrator Sanchez in the inspection. ■



Clockwise: The NTA Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita in Narvacan, Ilocos Sur; the Tobacco Dust Processing Plant in Sto. Tomas, La Union; Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez leading the inspection team, with Management Consultant Minerva P. Mizal and Executive Assistant Benjamin V. Sarmiento.

130 extension workers complete capability training



Text & Photos: **Freddie G. Lazaro**

NTA Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez recognized the vital roles of extension workers for the sustainable production of high-quality tobacco in the country, during the first day of the Annual Seminar-Workshop on Enhancing Extensionists' Capabilities (ASWEEC) held at the Monte Vista Hotspring and Conference Resort, Pansol, Calamba, Laguna on November 24-25.

Administrator Sanchez said that the NTA extension workers are the frontliners for reaching out the

current trends of tobacco farming technologies in the countryside.

She vowed the continuing support of the NTA top management to all the endeavors of the tobacco extension workers to continuously achieve the demand production of high-quality tobacco.

Participated by at least 130 extension workers, technicians, and branch managers of the NTA nationwide, the ASWEEC aims to review the current tobacco production practices; and to boost the knowledge of the extension workers to be more effective in disseminating the accurate tobacco production technology. It is also a venue for sharing tobacco farming best practices with consideration on environmental protection and maintenance.

The forum started with the revisiting of the NTA history, mandate, and the 8-point NTA agenda, priority programs, and projects, which was presented by Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay, the OIC Deputy Administrator for Operations.

NTA Director Nestor C. Casela discussed the programs for sustainable tobacco production including the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and the Agricultural Labor Practices.

Other topics discussed during the forum were the following:



Director Nestor C. Casela

persuasion and approaches in technology transfer; principles of clear and effective writing; report/document packaging cum workshop; community organizing; governance and management of an association/cooperative; extension worker as a professional; Integrated Pest Management; fertilizer, soil and water management/maturity indices, and harvesting; and curing structure and curing management. ■



Administrator Belinda S. Sanchez

Tobacco farmers get training on coop management

Text & Photos: **Andrea Marie C. Contillo**

TO enhance leadership management skills of tobacco farmers on cooperative operations, NTA conducted a four-day training on December 27-30 at the Metro Vigan Fiesta Hotel in Guimod, Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

At least 120 officers of the National Federation of Tobacco Farmers Association and Cooperatives (NAFTAC), the country's largest group of tobacco farmers, the block farm leaders, and the branch coordinators of the Farmers Organizational Development (FOD) attended the training.

The training, hosted by the NTA Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD), focused on leadership and values re-orientation and fundamentals for cooperatives. Invited as resource speakers during the training were the topic experts from the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA).

In her video message, Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez said that training farmer leaders on cooperative leadership management ensures the efficient administration of funds allocated by the government for them.

"We need to involve our farmers in the cooperative management toward empowering them to become more productive," she said.

The Administrator also highlighted the vital role of NAFTAC in the country's development of the tobacco industry as its officers have the chance to participate in the forum on Sustainable Tobacco Production, Good Agricultural Practices, and the utilization of funds derived from the tobacco excise taxes.

"NAFTAC forms part of determining tobacco floor prices of all types of tobacco in the biennial Consultative Tripartite Conferences. This group will also work for the upliftment of the lives of tobacco farmers by engaging in the cooperative movement," she added.

NAFTAC President Bernard Vicente commended NTA for initiating the leadership management training on cooperatives.

"Through this training, we familiarized ourselves with the pertinent laws for the efficient management of the cooperative. We learned our limitations and discipline



Resource Speaker Dr. Allen J. Ngilangil



Farmer leaders and extension workers in one of their activities

to make our cooperative successful and productive," said Vicente.

Benjamin V. Sarmiento, former San Juan, Ilocos Sur Mayor and now Executive Assistant to the Administrator, assured the continuing assistance from the NTA for the tobacco farmers.

Other NTA officials who graced

the training were Acting Deputy Administrator for Operations Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay; Jessie Pat M. Serna, Teofilo R. Quintal and Danilo C. Trongco, all members of the NTA Governing Board; and NTA Vigan Branch Manager Noralyn I. Idica and FTSD OIC Manager Engr. Randy I. Abella. ■

4 new managers; 32 others promoted

THREE Branch Office Managers and one Department Manager headed the long list of newly promoted staff at the National Tobacco Administration during the last semester of 2022.

The new managers sworn in by Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez in separate occasions were Zenaida T. Arrojo, Administrative Department; Engr. Noralyn I. Idica, Vigan Branch; Gilbert A. Taguiam, Cagayan Branch; and Engr. Roger T. Madriaga, Pangasinan Branch. Prior to her promotion, Arrojo was the Supply Officer V and chief of the General Services and Procurement Department, while Idica, Taguiam and Madriaga were Chief Agriculturists of their respective Branch Offices.

Also sworn in was the newly appointed Public Relations Officer V Freddie G. Lazaro, who has worked previously as Assistant Regional Director of Philippine Information Agency in Region 1.

Other promoted staff from each Department/Branch Office are as follows:

Internal Audit. Resty C. Cambe, from Accountant IV of Finance to Internal Auditor V; Rosalie P. Catura, from Internal Auditor II to Internal Auditor III; Rochelle C. De Peralta, from Human Resource and Management Officer II of Administrative to Internal Auditor III;

Corporate Planning. Claire Monnette P. Esteban, from Economist II to Project Evaluation Officer III; John James B. Canosa, from Agriculturist II of NTA Candon to Project Evaluation Officer II;

Farm Technology and Services. Evangeline C. Cabigan, from Senior Science Research Specialist (SRS) to Supervising SRS; Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco, from TPRO III to Project Development Officer IV; Prescilla A. Nisperos, from Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer (TPRO) III to Community Development Officer III;

Industrial Research. Cyrus Raymond C. Olivenza, from SRS II to Supervising SRS; Kathlyn Mae A. Tejano, from SRS I to Senior SRS; Sharwin D. Abad, from Science Research Assistant to SRS I; Jano P. Belleza, from Secretary I to Market Specialist I;

Regulation. Sinfrosa N. Valmonte, from TPRO III to Senior TPRO; Evangeline Y. Isip, from TPRO I to TPRO III;

Finance. Maylene B. Afos, from Financial Analyst I to Financial Analyst II; Leah C. Fiesta, from Secretary I of Corporate Planning to Senior Bookkeeper;

Ilocos Norte. Divina D. Pagdilao, from Supervising TPRO to Chief Agriculturist; *Vigan.* Gloria L. Abella, from TPRO I to Agriculturist II; Delia R. Giron, from TPRO I to TPRO III;

Abra. Melben B. Bejarin, from TPRO III to Senior TPRO; Natividad B. Quibilan, from TPRO I to Agriculturist II;

Candon. Oliva C. Galdones, from Agriculturist II to Senior TPRO; Marcelia P. Pulgar, from Agriculturist II to Senior TPRO; Rosella A. Dosono, from Agriculturist I to TPRO; Leonardo C. Escobar, from Agriculturist I to TPRO III;

La Union. Potenciano H. Apilado, from TPRO III to Senior TPRO; Virgilio A. Garcia, from TPRO I to Agriculturist II;

Pangasinan. Edna C. Parlaoan, from TPRO I to TPRO III; Israel C. Ramos, from Agriculturist I to Agriculturist II; and

Isabela. Perpetuo C. Dalloran, from Supervising TPRO to Chief Agriculturist; and Lagrimas B. Beltran, from TPRO III to Senior TPRO. ■

20 of 33 new appointments are extension workers

NTA has new extension workers, 18 Tobacco Production and Regulation Officers (TPRO) I and two Agriculturists I, in the branch offices this year.

The new TPROs are: *Ilocos Norte* - Oliver S. Tapec, Marilyn O. Dahilig, John Kaiser D. Arellano; *Abra* - Jemima C. Santiago; Candon - Karlyn E. Dosono, Mena Rose T. Tudayan, Warren M. Degamo, Mark John T. Cabuag; *La Union* - Regine B. Ducusin, Karish Joy A. Sixto, Jesrael P. Rillera; *Pangasinan* - Anne Magarett P. De Fiesta; *Cagayan* - Jerwin P. Tapulao, Harold Z. Quilang, Elimario F. Batang Jr.; *Isabela* - Emer C. Hernandez, Feriel C. Batnag, and Marjory L. Basa.

The new Agriculturists are Daniel Roy A. Siababa of Vigan and Gelre John R. Tagapan of Isabela.

Other appointments are as follows:

Alvin N. Gacayan, Driver, Office of the Administrator; Krisyleen C. Jayme, Secretary I, Regulation; Kriscia Mae M. Vidal, Internal Auditor I, IAD; Marissa J. Alvero, Internal Auditor I, IAD; Jayson I. Gannaban, Audio-Visual Technician II, Administrative; Gina C. Cabotage, Secretary I, Finance; Christine E. Oclaray, Science Research Specialist II, FTSD; Rannie Joy B. Sebastian, Secretary I, FTSD; Vina Rizza D. Salut, Secretary I, Ilocos Norte; Maureen V. Cadaro, Cashier II, Vigan; Mark Louie I. Silario, Driver, Vigan; Angelica A. Ragasa, Accountant II, Cagayan; and Mona Krisel C. Garrido, Cashier III, Isabela. ■



Administrator & CEO Belinda S. Sanchez (leftmost) swears in newly promoted and appointed staff of NTA Ilocos Norte, IRD-Batac, and FTSD on December 17.

NTA holds orientation for JO personnel

THE NTA Administrative Department conducted a virtual orientation program for its Job Order (JO) personnel on PhilHealth membership, collection and benefits on October 13 at the Board Room of the NTA Central Office in Quezon City for the participants in the Central Office and online for the Branch Offices. A total of 142 JO personnel from the Branch Offices in Abra, Vigan, Candon, La Union, Pangasinan, Isabela, Cagayan, including the Central Office, participated in the one-day activity.

Representatives from Philhealth, Josephine Montero, Social Insurance Officer I; Liam May C. Mateo; Social Insurance Assistant I; and Laurence Kenneth Rosales, P-Cares Head, discussed the Group Enrollment Program on Membership, Collection and Benefits of enrolling in Philhealth.

According to Atty. Jun Fred V. Parado, acting HRMO V and officer in-charge (OIC) of the Administrative Services Division, the activity is consistent with the policy of NTA Administrator/CEO Robert Victor G. Seares Jr. of granting the maximum benefits to all employees, including the JOs.

He added that the JOs have also been provided with SSS and Pag-Ibig coverage. They will also be receiving a 12% premium of their salary on October 14, per Memo No. 083-2022, dated September 29, 2022, or the "Implementing Guidelines for the Grant of CY 2022 Premium Pay on the Wages for Job Order Hirees, for the period of July 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022.

In her message, Administrative Department Manager Zenaida T. Arrojo expressed her most sincere gratitude on behalf of the agency to Philhealth for taking time to attend the Orientation Program, despite their busy schedules.

Atty. Parado said that a Letter of Commitment and Manual Non-disclosure Agreement, two documents setting forth the rights and obligations of the parties, are set to be signed by the heads of NTA and PhilHealth.

The program was moderated by Rochelle C. De Peralta, HRMO II, of the Administrative Services Division. ■



Clockwise: Resource persons from PCW; CorPlan Manager Fortuna C. Benosa; and participants from NTA Cagayan

NTA mainstreams GAD's importance for gender-responsive society

DESIGNATED members of the Executive Committee and GAD Focal Persons of NTA's GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) from the Central and Branch Offices participated in the conduct of the 2022 GAD Webinar 7 sponsored by the Philippine Commission on Women's (PCW), held on October 27, with the theme, "The GAD Agenda: A Strategic Beginning Towards a Gender-Responsive Agency."

The webinar was designed to ensure that the government agencies will pursue gender equality in all aspects of the development process to achieve the vision of a gender-responsive society where women and men equally contribute to and benefit from development.

The event's agenda was thoroughly expounded by the discussants, giving emphasis on the very purpose of the learning session which impressed the importance of formulation of the agency's GAD strategic framework and plan to achieve organizational goals on gender equality and women empowerment.

Additionally, the webinar dwelled on the formulation of the components of the GAD such as the GAD's vision, mission and goals, and featured the success stories and lessons of the agencies that have developed and operationalized their GAD Agenda.

For NTA, the activity was facilitated by the GFPS, chaired by Corporate Planning Department Manager Fortuna C. Benosa, assisted by the GAD Focal Persons on Organization-Focused PAPS and Client-Focused PAPS, led by Michelle P. Nacpil, HRMO III and Coordinator, and selected representatives from the branch offices in Abra, Ilocos Norte, Vigan, Candon, La Union, Pangasinan, Cagayan, and Isabela.

The GFPS of NTA was created pursuant to Special Order No. 0403, issued by Administrator /CEO Robert Victor G. Seares, Jr. in June 20 this year. ■

Meet the Administrator & CEO



Administrator and Chief Executive Officer
BELINDA S. SANCHEZ

**Leadership that
inspires better
services**



Oath-taking in Malacañang before Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin

BELINDA SARMIENTO-SANCHEZ is always up to the challenge. She was a young achiever and a seasoned public accountant, when President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. plucked her from her corporate job to serve as NTA Administrator and Chief Executive Officer in November.

The NTA Governing Board confirmed her appointment as the Administrator and CEO, and as Vice-Chair of the Board, during its 112th Special Board Meeting on November 24, or a few days after taking her oath of office in Malacañang.

The first ever lady boss of the regulatory agency, Sanchez became the key official of the industry to rally support for the Marcos administration's efforts to turn the farm sector into an engine of growth and to achieve food security.

Upon her assumption of her new career, the 45-year-old administrator expressed her strong commitment to support the President's 8-point Economic Agenda as she vowed to ensure that the agency will continue to fulfill its mandate to uplift the lives of the tobacco farmers and their communities.

Among her early actions was a meeting with tobacco manufacturers and traders on November 29 to get their support to the modernization programs initiated by the NTA benefitting the tobacco farmers and to address various issues and concerns affecting the tobacco industry.

On separate occasions in December, she visited local officials in tobacco-growing areas to discuss various support assistance to the farmers to sustain the Virginia tobacco production in the region. Her trip to Ilocos included an inspection and assessment of operational status of income-generating facilities that were established to boost the country's tobacco industry and to bring an additional source of livelihood for the tobacco farmers.

Before the end of the year, she has visited all eight provincial offices to meet the Branch managers and their staff, all front liners in the service to the tobacco farmers. She met the extension workers during their annual capability seminar-workshop. Facebook feed has been packed with photos of her greeting the staff, joining them in their activities, and administering oath of office to those who were newly promoted and appointed.

Taking on the role of Administrator, she said, is a challenging task, both physically and emotionally, and taking on those new responsibilities can be extremely tough. The NTA lady boss, however, appears to have been inspired on early undertakings, boosting her confidence, by assurance of support from all the stakeholders.

“I never expected that I would become the Administrator and CEO of this agency,” said Sanchez expressing her hesitations to take the challenge.

She added: “I may not have any experience with the tobacco industry, but I am well aware of the activities done in tobacco farming and how this cash crop changed people’s lives, especially those in Northern Luzon.”

Her family actually owns a tobacco farm in Barangay Camangaan in San Juan, Ilocos Sur, and she is also familiar with the activities related to producing tobacco such as the sticking the tobacco leaves. She admitted though that during her younger years, she mistake the tobacco leaves for petsay and the curing barns for tall local houses.

Her father Benjamin V. Sarmiento was a tobacco grower and a farmer leader before he became a long-time mayor of San Juan. Mr. Sarmiento, also a former member of the NTA Governing Board representing the farmers sector, has returned to the agency as Executive Assistant and Special Assistant to the Administrator.

The administrator is the third among the five children of former Mayor Sarmiento and Magdalene E. Dador. She is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Accountancy from the University of Sto. Tomas, and earned her Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license in 2000.

She is bringing to her new government position years of experience in her career with focus on satisfactory service. She has recognized the challenges ahead but pledged that NTA, with support from the various stakeholders, will remain at the forefront of industry development and sustainability.

She vowed to continue efforts to push for the funding of all the component programs and projects under the Sustainable Tobacco Enhancement Program (STEP), with the ultimate aim to modernize farm operations and industrialize tobacco production and integrated farming in tobacco areas.

With the emergence of innovations and technology, Sanchez said that her administration is bent on helping the tobacco farmers to develop a globally competitive crop, and earn a considerable profit in their farming venture.

“By next year, we will be conducting the Strategic Planning for the next five years and we intend to develop high-impact policies and programs to support our tobacco growers and other stakeholders, including more opportunities for them to earn additional income,” she said.

The first quarter of next year will be her first trading season and she will continue her engagement with the private sector and the LGUs for successful trading operations for the benefit of the tobacco growers.

Administrator Sanchez’s inclination to better service, along with her youthfulness, idealism and charm, delivers to the Top Management, employees, farmers and other stakeholders a good sign that the agency will definitely accomplish its mission for the next five years. ■

by **Neyo E. Valdez & Melanie Rapiz-Parel**



ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

Giovanni B. Palabay, PhD

THE Operations Group is composed of the eight Branch Offices, with the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD) as the lead unit in monitoring the activities of the Branch Offices. It also includes the Regulations Department (RD) and the Industrial Research Department (IRD) with their laboratories located in the Central Office in Quezon City and in Batac City, Ilocos Norte.



The Acting Deputy Administrator with members of the Governing Board and top officials from the Branch Office Operations, together with Private Sector Technical Representatives during the Techno-Updating Workshop held in Candon City.

Conduct of Regular and Applied Research

From July to December 2022, the Operations Group has vigorously pursued the completion of projects on tobacco research and development, both as regular and special/protocol research projects funded by the NTA Corporate Funds and from the collaborating private companies.

Germplasm Collection. On the forefront is the regular conservation and evaluation of tobacco germplasm which contains the genetic base from which we can get materials to supplant or even replace existing commercial varieties as the need arises. For the 2nd semester, there are 112 accessions that were rejuvenated. The total number of the collection is now 416 composed of the different tobacco types namely flue-cured, burley, cigar, and oriental. There are a few tobacco introductions, some related species of the genus *Nicotiana* where tobacco belongs, and other varieties that need further identification before final grouping.

Seed Production. This is the production of seeds of some of the currently recommended varieties under the Seed Production project. The varieties produced were selected based on the yearly requirement of the Branch Offices and the quantity of remaining seed stocks in the Seed Storage Laboratory. The total volume of seeds requested and given to the different Branch Offices is 110.47 kilograms with an equivalent hectareage of about 3,650 hectares for cropping season 2022-23. At present, there are 775.2 kg seed stock in the Seed Storage Laboratory comprising of different varieties of flue-cured neutral flavor (269.8 kg), flue-cured improved flavor (75.27 kg), Burley (60.4 kg), Cigar (192 kg), and Native Batek (Chewing), 131 kg.

Pest Clinic. A sound disease management strategy is espoused by the Pest Clinic - Quick Response Project which is

designed to identify disease and pest outbreaks in farmers' farms and to recommend strategies to control the specific disease/pest. For the 2nd semester, a verification of the disease-causing pathogens in the protocol research areas in Sinait, Ilocos Sur, and Balaoan, La Union proved the presence of *Fusarium sp* and *nematode*.

Soil Fertility Mapping and Water Management. The project that involved the monitoring of soil and water quality in the different tobacco growing areas was in its fifth and last year of implementation this year. The study sites are Ilocos Norte, Abra, Ilocos Sur, and La Union. The study revealed that 80.55% of the planting areas are suitable for tobacco production, and only 6.38% of these areas are unsuitable due to high salinity. The level and classification of each area were translated into a suitability and fertility map based on the NTA Soil Classification Scheme for both fertility and salinity

Verification Trials on Fertilizer Recommendations. The verification trials on the use of the fertilizer recommendations based on soil fertility status were completed. The results suggest that we can come up with a location-specific fertilizer recommendation but would need further verification. It is deduced that the yields obtained in each specific farm are less the effect by the current fertility level of the soil but more by the cultural management employed by the farmer, starting from land preparation to postharvest activities. Thus, strictly following the recommended POT is of utmost importance.

Evaluation of LP2, LP4, and NAB) Production Technology. In terms of cultural management, we evaluated the two technologies of ULPI, called LP2 and LP4, using the variety PD 1378LC. It was found that the LP2 technology

uses four more bags of complete fertilizer compared to the LP4 technology. Additional potassium was added under LP2 technology. On the other hand, LP4 technology uses two more bags of urea compared with LP2 technology.

The Native Broadleaf (NAB) tobacco hybrids C9, D1, and D2 used as cigar wrapper and fillers, are now widely grown in Region 2 but are not yet registered with the National Seed Industry Council. We conducted an evaluation of the agronomic, qualitative performance, and profitability of the varieties, which we can provide to ULPI as additional data that they can use in the registration of the varieties.

Engineering Projects

TRAFMAP. One initiative in the engineering aspect is the Development of NTA Projects and Tobacco-Related Activities and Facility Map (TRAFMAP) for the Stakeholders of the Tobacco Industry, which surveyed the current tobacco farmers, curing barns and sheds and machinery, facilities, animals, and other projects of Regions 1, 2, and Abra. The surveying and data gathering lasted for one year, resulting in a total number of 15,052 geotagged tobacco farmers, and tobacco-related facilities and activities.

Drip Irrigation System. Another project of the division is a drip irrigation system which was evaluated on a tobacco farm in Pilar, Abra. The system is envisioned to be sustainable in terms of water conservation and innovation in tobacco production. Results in the evaluation in Abra showed low performance in the growth of the tobacco crop because of factors that have not been recorded during the trial. The system has been brought to Batac and has been set up as research-managed to validate the previous results and to attempt improvements to make it a viable irrigation system.

Construction of a Collapsible Air-Curing Shed. Another engineering project designed to reduce the cost of post-harvest management was the construction of a collapsible air-curing shed for tobacco curing. Evaluation of the shed showed a significant difference in terms of structural performance and service life compared to the conventional curing sheds. Reports show the structural performance of 6,000 kg of fresh stalk-cut tobacco can be loaded and can provide a service life of seven to 10 years with proper care and maintenance. The



Drone testing in Ilocos Norte

PROFILE

GIOVANNI B. PALABAY, PhD

*OIC, Office of the Deputy Administrator for Operations
Department Manager III, NTA La Union*



Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay values his education and well-rounded job history as the factors that have molded him as a dynamic leader, being the Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Deputy Administrator for Operations, and concurrently the Branch Manager of NTA La Union. Vanni, as he is fondly called, possesses a solid academic background, having graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Economics, cum laude. He finished his Master's degree in Business Administration at the Divine World College, Laoag City in 1986, and was a recipient of a government scholarship (1987-1989) under the then PTRTC Manpower Development Program where he was a master's candidate in Public Policy at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. He finished Doctor of Philosophy in Rural Development (with Specialization in Farming System) at the Benguet State University in 2005. In 2014, he was offered a post-doctoral course by the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), Tagaytay City under the Public Management Development Program (PMDP)-Senior Executives Class Batch 3 "Sinagtala." He was conferred a Diploma in Development Management in 2015.

Prior to his promotion as Branch Manager in 1999, he had been the Division Chief of the then NTA Mindanao Branch since 1991. As Department Manager for 23 years now, he has thorough knowledge of all aspects of NTA programs/projects.

His dedication towards the attainment of the Agency's targets is unquestionable and exemplified by his balanced approach of stern and incessant management style, and at the same time provides motivation to his staff until said targets are realized. Being the exceptional Team Leader that he is, he gets things done and always makes the difference. He is also ever ready to serve, very punctual in reporting to the office and makes sure that all clients, especially the tobacco farmers are properly served.

At present, he is NTA's regional focal person and has effectively established close coordination and linkages with LGUs and different Regional Offices particularly the Department of Agriculture where he is the Regional Chairman of GAWAD SAKA for Agricultural Achievers; National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); and the National Union of Career Executive Service Officers (NUCESO), Region I Chapter, where he is currently the 1st Vice President. He also represented the past and present Administrator/CEO in congressional hearings and meetings, DA ManCom Meetings and on North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (NLGQ) meetings.

(Emma Beth B. Fantastico)



Gathering of leaf samples by the Industrial Research Department in La Union (Photo: Aryann Sangil)

design was presented during the CY 2022 Techno-updating, where different stakeholders showed their appreciation and commendation for the collapsible curing shed.

Production Support Service Projects

Conduct of Various Trainings and Seminar-Workshops.

As part of the agency's Farmers Organizational Development program, the Production Support Services Division of the FTSD has revived the Annual Seminar-Workshop on Enhancing Extensionists' Capabilities (ASWEEC), held on November 24-25 in Calamba, Laguna, to update 130 extension workers (EWs) on the newest tobacco information and technology and enhance their ability to organize farmers into associations and cooperatives; and enhance their skills in persuasion and communication.

Another activity, conducted on December 27-30 at Metro Vigan Fiesta Garden Hotel in Barangay Guimod, Bantay, Ilocos Sur, was the Seminar on Leadership and Values Reorientation and Fundamentals of Cooperative. The seminar was participated in by 120 participants (NAFTAC officers, block farm leaders and Branch Coordinators for Farmers' Organizational Development from the eight Branch Offices).

Another was the three-day Training on Remotely Piloted Aircraft System on July 27-29, at the FTSD Office in Batac City. The 17 participants included the Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers (ABE), technical staff, and researchers from the Branch Offices, Regulation Department, Industrial Research Department, and FTSD.

In preparation for the Rice Production project, we conducted the virtual Training on Rice Production for all the EWs. The training aimed to improve the level of awareness of the EWs on the rice morphology, the different growth stages of the rice plant, and the different rice production and management practices from seed selection up to postharvest management making them more effective in providing technical assistance to the rice farmers.

Synchronized Tree Planting. A total of 795,812 tree seedlings were produced by 74 seedling growers from the eight Branch Offices for the Synchronized Tree Planting (STP) in July. Seedlings of mahogany, narra, gmelina, and fruit tree seedlings were distributed to various community organizations, private firms, local government units, government agencies, and private individuals. STP was a promotional component of the Renewable Fuelwood Energy Farm Development Project and Restoration of Ecological Integrity (RFEFDPREI) for the KahuyangPangkabuhayan at Pangkalikasan (KPP).

Tobacco Grower of the Year (TGY) Contest. This is implemented as a provincial contest for CY 2021-22. There were 137 nominees from the different Branch Offices, but only 28 contestants were able to finish the contest. Eleven were declared winners from different Branch Offices per type and sub-type; three winners for Virginia from La Union, Ilocos Norte, and Candon Branch; five winners for Burley from Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, Isabela, and Cagayan Branch; two winners for Cigar Filler from Isabela and Cagayan Branch; and one winner for Native Batek Chewing from La Union Branch.

TCGS Quality Production, CY 2022-23. We have consolidated the accomplishments of all the Branch Offices on all the projects implemented on the branch level. First among the projects is the Tobacco Contract Growing System (TCGS) with a total participation of 8,446 farmer-cooperators (FCs) with an aggregate area of 5,301 hectares. The production assistance to FCs was either extended in full by the agency (NTA financing) or joint financing by NTA and LGU. The NTA financing provided production assistance in full, cash and material inputs, while for the NTA-LGU financing, the NTA shoulder 50% of cash input, and the LGU shoulder the material inputs in the form of subsidy. Both financings are technically assisted by the EWs of NTA. The total amount released for financial assistance was P199.9 million, wherein, P179.59 million was released as

full financing to 6,815 FCs with an area of 4,178.25 hectares while a total of P20.3 million was extended to NTA-LGU FCs of 1,631 with an area of 1,122.75 hectares.

Rice and Corn Production. The Rice component covered the Branch Offices in Region 1 and Abra while the Corn component covered Region 2. The project has a total farmer-cooperators (FCs) of 4,407 with an area of 3,314.89 hectares. The Rice component has 3,963 FCs and 444 FCs for the Corn component. The former registered a total area of 2,846 hectares while the latter has 469 hectares. As of December 31, the total collection was P30.59 million or 84.99%.

Industrial Research

The Quality Assurance Division has trained 114 new entrants on Harmonized Grading System for Virginia and Burley Tobacco and collected 47 imported tobacco samples from cigarette manufacturers for chemical evaluation.

The market assessment of the previous crop (CY 2021) made by the Market Research and Development Division reported an increase in the exportation of Virginia and Burley. The Native Broadleaf of Isabela has a bright spot for the local tobacco industry since, its bulk of local production is for exportation.

We have conducted also plant visits in the cigarette manufacturing facilities to gather first-hand information regarding raw materials, processing, and movement/marketing of tobacco products.

The Soil and Water Laboratory analyzed a total of 226 tobacco samples for nicotine and chloride analysis. A total of 570 soil samples of the soil monitoring and protocol research project were analyzed for organic matter, chloride, pH, Available Nitrogen (N), and Phosphorous (P).

The Product Development Division was able to acquire phytochemical composition testing (to determine active components) of their samples (ground tobacco leaves and tobacco stalk flour) through the DOST-ITDI Laboratory to define its uses and suitability to a certain purpose and products. It developed the appropriate packaging materials for veterinary products ready for marketing and commercialization. The Division was able to determine the cost estimates of producing tobacco stalk flour assessment as an additive to the thermoplastic and wood industry.

Regulatory Services

The Regulation Department has issued 110 licenses for local trading, export, import, and transshipments and approved 5,080 commodity clearances for export/import/transshipment.

Total volume of export of manufactured and unmanufactured tobacco, including other tobacco-related materials, ingredients, and spare parts for cigarette manufacturing was 44.83 million kilograms, valued at \$357.6 million. This volume is 46.85% (17.827 million kilograms) more than the volume of 38.05 million kilograms for last year. However, in terms of value, CY 2022 record is 38.47% (\$223.57 million) less than the value of \$581.17 million for the same period of CY 2021.

Total volume of import of manufactured tobacco, including other tobacco-related materials, ingredients, and spare parts for cigarette manufacturing was 64.96 million kilograms, valued at \$293.70 million. This volume is 8.75% (6.23 million kilograms) less than the volume of 71.19 million kilograms of last year. In terms of value, CY 2022 record is 3.65% (\$11.45 million) less than the value of \$6.23

Million for the same period in CY 2021.

Total volume of transshipment in-bound of manufacture and unmanufactured tobacco, including other tobacco-related materials, ingredients, and spare parts for cigarette manufacturing was 3.99 million kilograms, valued at \$33.24 million. This volume is 47.63% (3.63 million kilograms) less than the volume of 7.63 million kilograms of last year. In terms of value, CY 2022 record is 17.32% (\$6.96 million) less than the value of \$40.2 million for the same period in CY 2021.

The total volume of transshipment out-bound of manufactured and unmanufactured tobacco, including other tobacco-related materials, ingredients, and spare parts for cigarette manufacturing was 7.79 million kilograms, valued at \$43.92 million. This volume is 324% (5.956 million) more than the volume of 1.84 million kilograms last year. In terms of value, CY 2022 record is 241% (\$31.05 million) more than the value of \$6.23 million for the same period of CY 2021.

Total inspection conducted for the period was 488. This is 35% (264) less than the 752 inspections conducted for the same period in CY 2021.

Total tobacco acceptance for the period was 5.75 million kilograms. Out of the said volume, Virginia type recorded 1.9 million kilograms; Burley, 664,831 kilograms and Native tobacco, 3.15 million kilograms. This is 5% (280,243 kgs) more than the 5.45 million kilograms recorded in the same period in CY 2021.

Total collection of regulatory fees (license, permits, monitoring, inspection, and CEF) for the period is P68.287 million. This is 34% (P17.44 million) more than the total collection of P50.84 million for the period in CY 2021. ■



Monitoring of buying station by the Regulation Department in Cabugao, Ilocos Sur.



Signing of Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of the GPS Mapping with the private sector.

Verification Trial of the Different Fertilizer Recommendations Based on the Soil Fertility Status

by *Erwin B. Rabanal, Raymart P. Guzman, Mark John Cabuag, Jesrael Rillera, Randy I. Abella, Felisa R. Aurellano and Evangeline C. Cabigan*

Rationale/Background of the Study

The fertilizer recommendation based on the soil fertility classification scheme was proven effective by the National Tobacco Administration (Balito et al., 1993; Raquel et al., 1996). Since the Agency has a continuing activity on the soil and water quality monitoring in the tobacco-growing areas for the evaluation of soil fertility status and chloride level, this study provided the basis for fertilizer recommendation and salinity classification for specific tobacco-growing locations. With the many factors affecting the growth of the tobacco plant, the effect of the recommended fertilizer rate for a specific location should be verified to attain higher yield and profit which is the main aim of every crop production.

Fertilizer rate and time of application are important technology components in attaining both high yields and, more importantly, better quality. For the best quality possible, the tobacco plant should be provided with a moderate amount of nitrogen and phosphorus and a liberal amount of potassium. The amount depends on the fertility status of the soil. However, the need for a location-specific fertilizer recommendation is important because the fertility status of a given specific location differs from one another. New management technologies are being developed which allow the application of varied fertilizer rates, soil amendments, and pesticides.

Chemical fertilizer plays a vital role in modern agriculture. Its components can be quickly released in order to address the nutritional needs of the crop at the right time or stage. However, the extensive use of chemicals has also brought a series of negative effects on the soil. A research study showed that the long-term application of chemical fertilizer results in the rapid decrease of organic matter content in tobacco-growing soils in all regions, which can cause a series of problems such as soil compaction, malnutrition, and acidity and alkalinity disorders.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to: (1) verify the effect of the different fertilizer recommendations based on the soil fertility status on the growth and yield of tobacco for each location; (2) have a location-specific fertilizer recommendation for each tobacco-growing area; and (3) come up with a unified fertilizer recommendation for improved Virginia tobacco.



Collection of soil samples in San Francisco, Sudipen, La Union.



Application of fertilizer treatments before transplanting in Banna, Ilocos Norte.



Measuring of plant height at 40 days after transplanting in Sudipen, La Union.



Collection of soil samples after final harvesting.

Materials and Methods

In collaboration with the participating farmer-cooperators (FCs), the project was conducted under Virginia Improved Flavor tobacco farms in Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, and La Union. Soil sampling in the areas was done by the Branch Offices (BO). The study was composed of two set-ups: one under Soil Fertility Class I, and the other under Soil Fertility Class II, with four (4) FCs for each soil classification. Three recommended fertilizer options for Improved Virginia tobacco were used as contained in the Tobacco Production Manual (2021-2022). The fertilizer rates evaluated were based on the soil fertility classification scheme as recommended by Balito et. al. (1993) and Raquel et. al. (1996) as shown in Table 1. The names of the farmer-cooperators and the treatments are listed in Table 2. The freak rain in February 2022 totally destroyed the crop of some of the farmer-cooperators in Ilocos Sur and La Union thus they were excluded.

Option 1: 103-72-146 NPK	Option 2: 82-72-146 NPK	Option 3: 88.5-92-150 NPK
Sources: 8 bags of 10-18-24 2 bags of 0-0-50 6 bags of 21-0-0	Sources: 8 bags of 10-18-24 2 bags of 0-0-50 4 bags of 21-0-0	Sources: 4 bags of 18-46-0 6 bags of 0-0-50 5 bags of 21-0-0

Table 1. Quantitative description of NTA soil fertility classification scheme for flue-cured tobacco growing areas in the Philippines. NTA, 1993.

Class	pH	Organic Matter (%)	CI (ppm)	Available N (ppm)	Available P (ppm)	Exchangeable K (ppm)
I	5.6-7.3	>2.5	<13	>45	>55	>195
II	5.0-5.5 or 7.4-8.0	1.6-2.5	13-24	35-45	55	195
III	<5.0 or >8.0	<1.6	>25	<35	<55	<195

Experimental Design. The study was laid out in Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) wherein each farmer served as a replication.

Three different rates of the recommended fertilizer options (103-72-146 NPK, 82-72-146 NPK, and 88.5-72-150 NPK) were compared in Fertility Class I and Class II soils. In Class I soil, the fertilizers were applied at the rates of 10, 25, and 100% while in Class II soil, the rates applied were 50, 75, and 100%.

Data Gathered. The following data were gathered:

1. *Soil Sample.* Soil samples were collected before land preparation and after harvesting for soil analysis.
2. *Plant height.* Data on plant height was measured from the base of the plant up to the tip of the bud using a meter stick at 30, 45, before topping and after topping, or 60 days after transplanting (DAT) from 30 randomly selected sample plants.
3. *Days to first priming.* This was recorded to identify the effect of the fertilizer recommendation and fertilizer rate.
4. *Yield.* This was based on the total cured leaf weight (kg) from all priming's and was computed using the number of sample plants.

$$\text{Yield (kg/ha)} = [(Ws) \times (PPha/SP)]$$

Where: Ws - weight of sample (kg)
PPha - Plant population per ha
SP - Number of sample plants

5. *Nicotine and Reducing Sugar Content.* The leaf samples were collected according to leaf position whether lugs, cutters, or leaf. These were stripped, conditioned, ground and submitted to the Techno-Laboratory Services and Instrumentation Division (TLSID) for analysis

Significant Findings/Implications

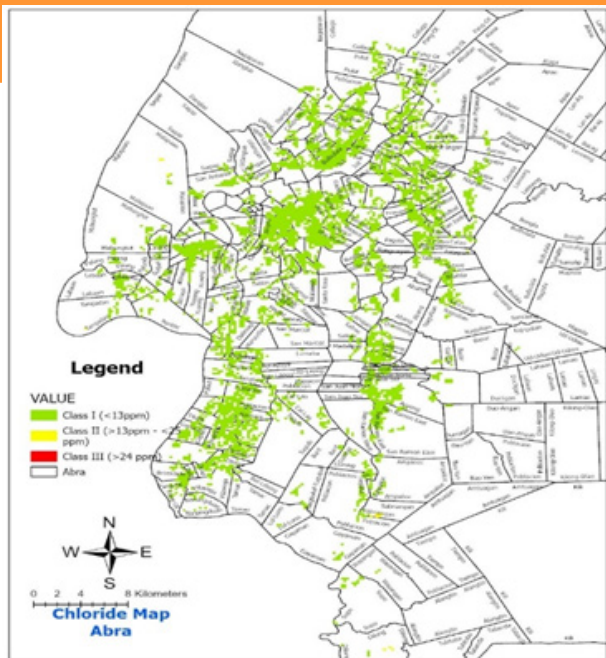
Soils collected before land preparation on farms that fall under Fertility Class I in the database were subjected to chemical analysis. In Ilocos Norte, seven out of eight farms evaluated were found to have lower fertility levels, either becoming Class II or III, compared with the record in the database which had been obtained three years earlier. Similarly, in Ilocos Sur, four out of seven farms evaluated had lower fertility levels while in La Union, four out of the 10 farms evaluated were found to have a lower fertility level. Overall, only 40% of the areas retained their soil classification in comparison with the three-year old data.

Results of the evaluation suggest that using only 10% to 25% of the recommended rate to fertilize Virginia tobacco grown in Class I soil, as recommended by NTA researchers back in 1993 and 1996 is no longer applicable. Using 75% or even 50% of the recommended rate might give comparable yields compared to the full rate of 100%, and this could be verified in a future evaluation trial.

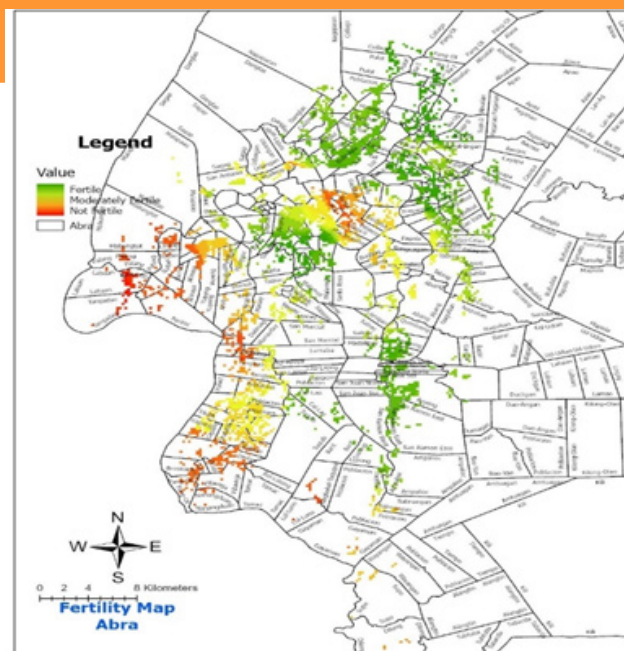
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The tobacco plants applied with 100% recommended fertilizer rate at 45 days after transplanting in Burgos, Ilocos Sur.



Chloride map of Abra



Fertility map of Abra

Monitoring of Soil and Water Quality in the Different Tobacco-Growing Areas, Year 5

by Ranie Joy B. Sebastian, Kenneth Russel L. Tanaval, Evangeline C. Cabigan and Randy I. Abella

Rationale/Background of the Study

In the past, high-quality tobacco leaves were produced by farmers. However, while some areas continue to produce good quality tobacco leaves, cigarette manufacturers and local traders have observed the declining quality of cured leaves in some areas. This problem can be largely attributed to the continuous planting of tobacco in salty or marginal areas and the deteriorating quality of soil and irrigation water.

To address the problem, there is a need for continuous monitoring of soil and irrigation water quality levels in the different tobacco-growing areas.

The National Tobacco Administration (NTA) started the soil and water quality assessment and monitoring from 1989 until 2002. Sampled areas were classified as to soil fertility and chloride levels, thereby identifying salty and marginal areas for tobacco production. The project, however, was not sustained due to budget constraints.

Given the market demand for quality tobacco leaves, there is a need to continue the soil and water characterization activities of NTA to update the present fertility status of the soil and to have a possible expansion of tobacco production areas if the fertility warrants. It is also vital that fertilizer application for Virginia tobacco be based on the initial soil fertility or in accordance with the soil fertility classification scheme, which was developed and proven effective by NTA (Balito et al., 1993; Raquel et al., 1996). Marginal and salty areas should also be identified for some policy measures to prohibit the growing of tobacco in salt-affected areas and encourage the production

of other crops that may help ameliorate these identified areas.

Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is currently undertaking programs to address the reduction of agricultural productivity brought about by climate change. One project component is the generation of Integrated Climate Change Geographic Information System (ICCGIS), a decision-support tool to help identify priority investment areas given the projected climate scenarios.

For NTA's part, the continuous monitoring of soil and water quality in the different Virginia tobacco-growing areas will support the DA's project, specifically, on the formulation of climate change-responsive policies in Agriculture R & D, Extension and Regulations guided by agricultural suitability maps. Gathered information on the locations and description (coordinates) of the sampling sites and the measured soil characteristics will be used as input in the preparation of the soil fertility map using the GIS software. These would be of great help in the combination of precision farming and site-specific crop management to improve quality, increase yield, reduce production cost, and minimize negative impact on the environment.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study was conducted to generate / update information on the fertility and chloride status of the different Virginia tobacco growing areas in Region 1 and Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Specifically, the study was conducted to: (1) determine

the soil fertility levels of the different tobacco growing areas; (2) identify areas with high levels in the soil and irrigation water; (3) provide fertilizer recommendations to the farmers based on the results of the soil fertility and analysis; and (4) translate soil fertility and chloride data into data points for soil mapping purposes.

Methodology

Site Description. The study covered the Virginia tobacco-growing areas in Region 1 and CAR. Region 1 tobacco areas include Ilocos Norte, with a total land area of 350,400 hectares involving 21 municipalities and 2 cities located within latitude 120.670°E and 18.150°N; Ilocos Sur has a total land area of 259,600 ha having 32 municipalities and 2 cities and falls within 120.504°E and 17.209°N; and La Union with total land area of 150,400 ha and has 19 municipalities and 1 city situated within 120.406°E 16.666°N. In CAR, Abra has a total land area of 395,500 ha with 27 municipalities located within 120.799°E 17.606°N. The climate in Region 1 is type 1 with two distinct pronounced seasons, dry from November to April and wet during the rest of the year. Region 1 has the following soil types: clay, clay loam, silt clay loam, sandy clay loam etc.

Process on Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation

Activity 1. *Conduct of Hands-on Training on Soil and Water Sampling Techniques and Coordinates Determination.* Assisting Extension Workers from the identified Branch Offices who were assigned to selected sampling areas (by municipality) had undergone hands-on training on proper soil and water sampling techniques and determination of coordinates (longitude and latitude) by using the global positioning system (GPS) device and appropriate mobile phones installed with GPS application. The training was spearheaded by the Farm Technology and Services Department (FTSD).

Activity 2. *Soil and Water Sample Collection.* Sampling was done from the different tobacco-growing areas of the identified municipalities of the provinces of Region 1 and CAR. Priority areas were selected based on the reported total areas planted to Virginia Improved Flavor tobacco for each Branch Office. Samples of soil and irrigation water from randomly selected areas were collected by the TPROs/Agriculturists assigned in the identified areas/municipalities before land preparation following the proper sampling techniques and handling of samples. Coordinates of the sampling sites were determined using the Global Positioning System (GPS) device. These data, together with other information regarding the sampling sites were recorded by filling up the sample identification form (FTSD SW Form 1). Immediately after collection, samples together with the accomplished form were brought to the FTSD for initial recording and preparation for analysis.

Activity 3. *Sample Preparation.* All samples received were coded immediately and labelled correctly and remained intact as samples were prepared and processed. Soil clods were pounded, spread in clean sheets of manila paper, and air-dried in a dust and contaminant-free area. Afterwards, thoroughly dried samples were ground and passed through series of sieving using 2-mm and 40-mm sizes. Weight of samples for specific analysis were as follows: 5.00 g for available Nitrogen (N), 1.00 g each for available Phosphorus

(P) and exchangeable Potassium (K), 0.50 g for Organic Matter (OM) and 20 g each for water-soluble Chloride (Cl) and pH. Water samples were stored immediately inside the refrigerator pending processing and analysis. Prior to analysis, water samples were filtered using Whatman # 42 filter paper. The data gathered were Chloride (Cl), pH, and Electrical Conductivity (EC).

Activity 4. *Soil fertility Evaluation.* The Techno-Laboratory Services and Instrumentation Division (TLSID) of the Industrial Research Department (IRD) spearheaded the analysis of the soil and water samples. Soil chemical analysis included organic matter, available N (determined using the Modified Walkley-Black (Walkley and Black, 1947) and Modified Kjeldahl (Bremner, 1965) methods, respectively), Phosphorus (analyzed using Bray 1 (Bray and Kurtz, 1945) for Acidic, slightly acidic, and slightly alkaline and for Alkaline, calcareous, Olsen (Olsen, et.al, 1954)), Potassium (by Ammonium Acetate extraction) and pH (by potentiometric reading of 1:1 soil-water ratio suspension). The result of soil chemical analysis was computed, values were integrated and interpreted to come with the soil fertility classes for tobacco.

Activity 5. *Soil and water chloride evaluation.* Water-soluble Cl in the soil and in water samples were determined following the Titration method (PCARR 1980). Results of analysis were classified based on the critical value for Cl in the soil which is equal to 13 ppm and in water at 20 ppm which were established with regards to the effect of the ion on the quality of the tobacco leaves and not on plant growth. The critical value of 13 ppm represented the value measured in soils where incidences of salty tobacco has been reported (Balito et. al, 1993).

Activity 6. *Generation of Data Points for Soil Fertility, Soil Chloride and Water Chloride Maps.* All data on soil characteristics and gathered information from each sample, i.e., area coordinates and parameter values (results of

Table 1. Suitability criteria of soil properties for soil fertility of Virginia Improved flavor tobacco production (Balito, L.E.T., et.al, 1993)

Soil Properties	Class Values	Suitability Rating
Nitrogen (ppm)	>45	Sufficient
	35 – 45	Moderately Sufficient
	<35	Insufficient
Phosphorus (ppm)	>55	Sufficient
	55	Moderately Sufficient
	<55	Insufficient
Potassium (ppm)	>195	Sufficient
	195	Moderately Sufficient
	<195	Insufficient
Organic Matter Content (%)	>2.5	Sufficient
	1.6 – 2.5	Moderately Sufficient
	<1.6	Insufficient

Table 2. Fertilizer recommendation based on soil fertility class.

SOIL FERTILITY CLASS	FERTILIZER RECOMMENDATION*
Class I	10-25% of the Fertilizer Recommended Rate
Class II	50-75% of the Fertilizer Recommended Rate
Class III	100% of the Fertilizer Recommended Rate

*Source: Virginia Improved Flavor Tobacco, POT 2018 a. OPTION 1: 103-72-146 kg N-P2O5-K2O/ha
 b. OPTION 2: 82-72-146 kg N-P2O5-K2O/ha
 c. OPTION 3: 88.5-92-150 ka N-P2O5-K2O/ha

analyses) were encoded as excel files. Soil fertility maps were produced after all the tobacco-growing barangays of the targeted municipalities and provinces were represented.

Fertility and Chloride Mapping

Different geoprocessing tools such as XY table to point, Clip tool, Kriging tool, reclassify and fuzzy overlay were used to generate fertility and chloride maps.

Table to Points. Coordinates encoded were constructed into a point feature using the XY table to point tool. This point contains the different soil properties, farmer name, location, and tobacco farm area.

Interpolation. The different soil properties such as pH, chloride, organic matter (OM), nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) were spatially analyzed and interpolated using the Kriging tool of the ArcGIS Pro software. The generated surface from interpolation at the same time was clipped and masked to the municipal boundary.

Reclassification. The generated surface/raster layer was reclassified using spatial analyst tool, reclassify, according to the criteria for the suitability of tobacco production (Table 1).

Overlay. Maps that were reclassified such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, organic matter, pH, and chloride were combined using Spatial analyst tool, fuzzy overlay to generate fertility map and chloride map

Activity 7. Generation of a Fertilizer Recommendation Report. Areas that are suitable, moderately suitable, and unsuitable for tobacco production were consolidated to generate fertilizer recommendations. The fertilizer recommendation was based on fertility class (Table 2).

Significant Findings and Implications

A total of 2,394 soil samples and 688 water samples were collected from Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra, and La Union. These samples were prepared and analyzed. The results of analysis were translated to spatial data to generate the soil fertility and chloride map for the region.

Table 3. Total area covered per soil nutrient and chloride contents in Region I and CAR.

Class	Area, ha	
	Fertility	Chloride
1	10,325.07- Sufficient	119,464.85 - Suitable
2	69,490.55 - Moderately Sufficient	19,356.11- Moderately Suitable
3	37,948.77 - Insufficient	9,473.44 - Unsuitable
Total	117,764.39	148,294.40

In the determination of soil fertility levels in these tobacco-growing areas in Region 1 and CAR, a total of 10,325.07 ha (8.76%) was classified as class I, 69,490.55 ha (59%) were classified as moderately sufficient, and 37,948.77 ha had insufficient nutrients which requires 100% of the fertilizer recommended rate. Class II which were classified as moderately sufficient only needs 50-75% of the fertilizer recommended rate. On the other hand, Class I which have sufficient soil nutrients only need 10% to 25% of the fertilizer recommended rate.

As to chloride levels in the areas of concern, 119,464.84 ha (80.56%) of the evaluated area is suitable for production, 19,356.11 ha (13.05%) are areas that tend to produce salty tobacco leaves and 9,473.44 ha are not recommended for tobacco production as shown in Table 3. Therefore, tobacco production in Region 1 and CAR is suitable for flue-cured tobacco except in areas with high chloride levels. Application of recommended fertilizer to supplement the insufficient amount of soil nutrients is recommended.

Based on the results and findings of the study, it is recommended that a proper distribution of sampling points should be done to generate a better result. The study should also continue the monitoring of the soil and water quality in the tobacco regions for the tobacco industry to be ready to the effect of climate change.

A study on the identification of the risks and hazards of climate change in tobacco production in the tobacco-growing regions is further recommended in order to manage its adverse effects for continuous production sustenance.■

Verification Trial of the Different Fertilizer Recommendations.... from PAGE 17

In the analysis of soil collected from the farms listed as Class II, only one out of eight, and one out of six farms retained their soil fertility classification (as contained in the database) in Ilocos Norte and La Union, respectively. In Ilocos Sur, on the other hand, the classification of all four farms has changed. It was found that the application of 50% and 75% of the recommended rate resulted in comparable yields among the plots in Ilocos Norte. In contrast, the yields obtained in Ilocos Sur and La Union were affected by the fertilizer rate wherein the application of 100% of the recommended rate resulted in significantly higher yields compared to the reduced rates. Thus, application of only 50% to 75% instead of 100% can be recommended in Ilocos Norte but not in Ilocos Sur and in La Union. This means that location-specific fertilizer recommendations can be made for Fertility Class II soil. Further verification should be done for Class I soil.

Grade distribution was not affected by the different fertilizer rates in both soil types. The results do not show any obvious correlation between the nicotine content and the kind and rate of fertilizer used, as well as with the soil classification.

Finally, the soil classification in the database should only serve as one of the guides in fertilization and not the sole basis. Since it has been proven in this verification trial that the fertility level of the soil could change over time, then monitoring the soil fertility should be a continuing activity. Further, the results of the evaluation have shown that the yields obtained in each specific farm are less the effect of the current fertility level of the soil but more due to the cultural management employed by the farmer, starting from land preparation to post-harvest activities. Thus, strictly following the recommended Package of Technology is of utmost importance.■

Henry T. De Vera

Tabtabungao, Rosario, La Union

SEASONED tobacco farmer Henry Tabernero De Vera depends largely on farming for his income and livelihood. And he considered the programs and projects of NTA that provided him the biggest support for him and his family.

He had been planting tobacco since his early 20s. His vast experience in tobacco farming, along with technology on tobacco production recommended by the agency, had improved the quality of leaf that he produces, thus resulting in better yield and higher income. He was one of the provincial awardees in the Search for Tobacco Growers of the Year for Burley Neutral Flavor Category in 2016. With more benefits from NTA projects, he was able to build a house made of concrete, purchase a tricycle, and invest gradually in submersible and other farm necessities.

De Vera is a regular farmer-cooperators of major NTA projects, such as Tobacco Contract Growing System, Rice Production, Curing Barn Assistance, and Beef Cattle Production Assistance, and a beneficiary of free seedlings from the Improved Tobacco Seedling Production Project. He received subsidies from production and facility assistance, which he considers a regular blessing from the agency. In 2021, he gained extra income from his sale of calf, the offspring of the cattle he received under the BCPAP in the preceding year.

His greatest achievement though is his daughter's graduation from college. Angeline, one of the grantees of the NTA scholarship program, earned her Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture in July 2022.

De Vera is very grateful of the NTA for bringing such wonderful programs and projects that give farmers like him the opportunities to earn more, thus improving their livelihood and economic conditions.

(Kristin Mae S. Castañeda)



De Vera



Lorenzo

Susana Lorenzo

Vacante, Alcala, Pangasinan

SUSANA Lorenzo produced a yield of 5.3 metric ton of palay on a one-hectare farm with a gross income of P111,830 per hectare. Thanks to the Rice Wet Season 2022 project of NTA under the Integrated Farming and Other Income Generating Activities (IFOIGAP), which aims at increasing the income of tobacco farmers other than tobacco production.

Lorenzo is one of the 396 beneficiaries of the P5.9 million IFOIGAP-Rice Production project in Pangasinan. The beneficiaries, all members of the block farm covering Barangay Vacante, San Pedro Apartado, and Bersamin in Alcala, Pangasinan, received from NTA Pangasinan the cash assistance last June 30, at P19,800 per hectare, covering the cost of purchasing certified seeds, tractor or animal rental for land preparation, fuel for irrigation, organic, and inorganic fertilizer.

She said that with the early release of production assistance, she was able to plant early. Her early harvest earned her a P21.50 per kilo, higher than the prevalent price. She earned more from a good harvest of her crop in October with the 40% subsidy from the production assistance.

"I am so thankful to NTA and I hope that their income-generating projects will continue to help more beneficiaries," she said.

(Venbel V. Echalar)



L-R: Ilocos Sur Provincial Board Member Efren A. Rafanan, Senior TPRO Tomasito G. Taloza, Supervising TPRO Jose A. Taclas Jr., Ilocos Sur Governor Jeremias C. Singson, NTA Vigan Manager Engr. Noralyn I. Idica, Accountant III Jannalie T. Esquiedo, TPRO I Gloria L. Abella, Secretary I Erwin B. Venus, acting Administrative Officer Immanuel A. Rafanan, and Agriculturist I Christopher S. Cabanog.

NTA, Ilocos Sur reaffirm cooperation for farmers

NTA Vigan Manager Engr. Noralyn I. Idica paid a courtesy visit on Ilocos Sur Governor Jeremias "Jerry" C. Singson at the Provincial Farmers Livelihood Development Center in Vigan City on October 4.

Idica presented to the governor the status of implementation of the agency's various programs and projects, particularly on the accomplishments of the Vigan Branch Office. She underscored the results of the cooperation between the NTA and the provincial government, along with the local government units, resulting in the increase of farmer-cooperators and area in First District of Ilocos Sur.

She said that in the past tobacco seasons, the LGUs have shouldered the cost for inputs, such as fertilizers, crop protection agents (CPAs), and other farm input requirements of tobacco farmers in the district, especially contract growers under the Tobacco Contract Growing System. The NTA, on the other hand, provided production assistance at P18,500.00 per hectare, with 20% subsidy.

Governor Singson reaffirmed his commitment and unwavering support for the Agency and the tobacco farmers. He added that the provincial government has already acquired fertilizers for the upcoming tobacco season. He also shared his vision of providing free curing barns for every tobacco farmer in the province, in cooperation with the agency. ■



Distribution of farm inputs, equipment in Ilocos Norte.

The provincial government of Ilocos Norte distributed agricultural equipment and material inputs for tobacco production on November 8. Governor Matthew Marcos Manotoc attended the distribution of 50 units of sprayer, 1,200 bags of fertilizers, and bottles of crop protection agents to first batch of beneficiaries at the NTA Ilocos Norte Gallery in Batac City. He was assisted by his Chief of Staff Atty. Pancho Jose, Sangguniang Panlalawigan Member Jonathan O. Torralba, Sustainable Development Center OIC Luz Ortal, and NTA Ilocos Norte Branch Manager Luzviminda U. Padayao. *(Gem Denise Ventura)*

Courtesy call on LGU leaders in Ilocos, Cagayan

Text and Photos by *Melanie Rapiz-Parel*

NTA Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez paid official courtesy visits on the local officials of the Virginia tobacco-producing provinces in Regions 1 and 2.

Administrator Sanchez, along with acting Deputy Administrator for Operations Dr. Giovanni Palabay, acting Deputy Administrator for Support Services Dinah E. Pichay; and Special Assistant to the Administrator Benjamin V. Sarmiento, visited on separate occasions Candon City Mayor Eric D. Singson (December 14), Ilocos Sur Vice Governor Ryan Luis V. Singson (December 15), and Ilocos Norte Governor Matthew M. Manotoc (December 16).

The three local officials assured NTA of their commitment to provide various support assistance to the tobacco farmers to sustain the Virginia tobacco production in the region.

Candon City Mayor Singson informed Administrator Sanchez that LGU Candon had initially given farm inputs assistance to their tobacco farmers.

Aside from farm inputs assistance, Vice Governor Singson and Governor Manotoc said the their respective provincial governments had also given various support assistance to the tobacco farmers.

Governor Manotoc, as the chairman of the Regional Development Council (RDC) of Region 1, also committed to support all the proposals and programs for the development and sustainability of the tobacco industry in the region.

In Region 2, Administrator Sanchez met with Tuguegarao City Mayor Maila Rosario Ting-Que on December 28, to discuss some programs that will help boost the tobacco industry in Cagayan province.

With the Administrator during the courtesy call were Special Assistant to the Administrator Benjamin V. Sarmiento, NTA Consultant Minerva P. Mizal, NTA Cagayan Branch Manager Gilbert A. Taguiam, Atty. Jun Fred V. Parado of the Legal Department, and Public Relations Officer V Freddie G. Lazaro. ■



With Ilocos Sur Vice Governor Ryan V. Singson



With Ilocos Norte Governor Matthew Marcos Manotoc



L-R: NTA Candon OIC Adonis D. Lazo, OAD Consultant Minerva P. Mizal, Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez, Candon City Mayor Eric D. Singson, Special Assistant to the Administrator Benjamin V. Sarmiento, OAD Private Secretary Hazel Anne M. Inguillo, and Acting Candon Branch Chief Agriculturist Amelia Veronica L. Lacaden.



A tobacco grower at the third priming of new-improved filler tobacco in Barangay Macatcatud in Magsingal, Ilocos Sur. NTA Vigan File Photo

Ilocos Sur, Isabela get top shares from 2020 tobacco excise tax

by Freddie G. Lazaro

ILOCOS SUR and Isabela will get the biggest share from the P19.01 billion allocations for local government units (LGUs) from the excise taxes collected from tobacco in 2020.

In a memorandum circular signed by DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman on December 14, Ilocos Sur will get P9.28 billion, or (61.8%) from the P15.01 billion from excise taxes on locally manufactured Virginia-type cigarettes and Isabela will get P1.89 billion or 47% from the P4 billion from the Burley and Native tobacco variety.

Other Virginia-producing provinces with their shares are: Abra with P2 billion; Ilocos Norte with P1.88 billion; and La Union with P1.82 billion.

In the provincial RA 7171 excise tax share, 70 percent will be distributed to the LGUs, and the 30 percent goes to the provincial local government.

In the municipal level, seven of the top 10 municipalities with the biggest share from Virginia-type excise tax collection are from Ilocos Sur: Magsingal, P764.8 million; Candon City, P656.5 billion; Cabugao, P567.5 billion; Sinait, P456.3 billion; Sta. Cruz, P414.1 billion; San Juan, P323.5 billion; and Burgos, P298.5 billion.

Rounding up the top ten are Pilar (Abra), P650.6 billion; Balaoan (La Union), P529.3 billion; and Pinili (Ilocos Norte), P298.8 billion.

Other major provinces that produce Burley and Native variety with their shares are: Pangasinan with P538.3 million; Ilocos Sur with P383.1 million; Misamis Oriental with P329.1 million, La Union with P295.9 million; and Cagayan with

P201.4 million.

In the municipal level, the top five municipalities with the biggest share from Burley and Native excise tax collections are from Isabela: Quirino, P169.6 million; Roxas, P154 million; Aurora, P149.6 million; Mallig, P102.4 million; and Reina Mercedes, P72.6 million.

Rounding up the top 10 are Alcala (Pangasinan), P72 million; Ilagan City (Isabela), P58.4 million; Narvacan (Ilocos Sur), P48 million; Bauang (La Union), P44.2 million; and Laguindingan (Misamis Oriental), P40.5 million.

Shares are distributed among provinces according to their volume of tobacco production based on the certifications issued by the NTA and endorsed by the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The identification of the list of programs and projects to be implemented, the beneficiary LGUs shall, with the assistance of the DA and NTA, conduct public consultations with tobacco farmers duly identified by the NTA to determine the appropriate programs and projects beneficial to the said farmers.

The programs and projects to be implemented by the beneficiary LGUs using the tobacco excise tax fund should be included in their duly approved Local Investment Programs and Annual Investment Programs.

In 2019 production, LGUs received P24.8 billion from tobacco excise tax, including P19.87 billion from Virginia-type cigarettes and P4.94 billion from taxes on burley and native tobacco. ■

NTA LA UNION *Text and Photos by Aryann Sangil*

Distribution of farm inputs from QRF

NTA La Union distributed farm inputs from the Quick Response Fund (QRF) of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) to selected tobacco farmer-beneficiaries, in Bauang, La Union on December 9.

A total of 600 packs of Plant Growth Enhancer, 400 bags of urea (46-0-0), and 400 bags of ammonium phosphate (16-20-0) fertilizer were distributed to 200 tobacco farmers. Each affected tobacco farmer received two bags of 46-0-0 and 16-20-0 and three packs of the Plant Growth Enhancer. ■



Benchmarking of LGUs, farmer-leaders from Mindanao



LOCAL officials and tobacco farmer leaders from the municipalities of Laguindingan and El Salvador in Misamis Oriental, and Datu Montawal in Maguindanao visited NTA Branch Office in Bauang, La Union on September 21, October 18, and November 7, respectively to conduct benchmarking on tobacco production and branch operations.

They were accompanied by Ma. Mercedes M. Ayco, Tobacco Production and Regulation Officer III of the Extension Office in Mindanao.

NTA La Union Manager and Acting Deputy Administrator for Operations Dr. Giovanni B. Palabay and Branch Chief Agriculturist Emma Beth B. Fantastic welcomed the visitors from Mindanao on separate occasions.

During the brief orientation programs, Supervising TPRO Engr. Warlie V. Oribello presented the various programs and projects of the agency, including activities of the Branch Office in their implementations. ■

NTA CAGAYAN

Tree seedlings for Cagayan Police

NTA Cagayan Manager Gilbert A. Taguam presented a tree seedling to PS/Insp. Tristan Zambale, Deputy Force Commander of the Cagayan Police Office during the turnover of 2,000 tree seedlings for the tree-planting activities of the Cagayan police on November 9. The seedlings of different species will be planted in four sites or divided among the four platoons based in Tuguegarao City; Annafatan, Amulung; Piat; and Baggao, Cagayan. **(Josefa P. Correo)** ■



NTA KADIWA NI ANI AT KITA

THIRTY trainees passed the the Slaughtering Operations (Swine) NC II Assessment (Batch 13) last October 14-16 at the NTA AgriPinoy Training School, NTA Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita in Nanguneg, Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. Twenty-two of the 30 passers are TESDA scholars. The rest are regular trainees, namely, Melchor C. Bugarin, John C. Cabalce, Ferdinand C. Crisolo, Jaime C. Gumarang, Junario C. Gumarang, John Paul B. Sanidad, Mark Joseph C. Quilla, and Crispin S. Velasco. **(Mary Rose D. Canaoy)**

NTA ISABELA



NTA, ULPI consultative meeting with LGU Quezon. NTA Isabela Manager Joefrey T. Bautista and ULPI Senior Project Manager Giovanni Carlos Tan met with the local government of Quezon, Isabela represented by its Municipal Administrator Atty. Ryan Anthony Diampoc to discuss Isabela Burley production, possible expansion areas and projects for NTA and ULPI, held at the municipal hall on November 14. *(Ian Kenneth V. Costales)*



Luna farmers' association formed. NTA Isabela facilitated the formation of farmers' association of 55 tobacco growers in Barangays Sto. Domingo and San Isidro in Luna, Isabela on October 13. In the meeting and election of officers held in Barangay Luna, NTA Isabela acting Branch Agriculturist Perpetuo C. Dalloran discussed the facility of granting assistance to the members as one of the benefits of forming an association for the tobacco growers. The said meeting was made possible through the Farmers Organization and Development Program of NTA. *(Marjory L. Basa)*



Mediation between farmers and buyers. NTA Isabela Manager Joefrey T. Bautista facilitated mediation between tobacco farmers of Macugay, Luna, Isabela and buyer firm Universal Leaf Philippines Inc.-ULPI during a meeting held in Barangay Macugay on November 7. Representatives from the ULPI and the local government of Luna were present to discuss and settle the issues and concerns of the tobacco farmers. *(Ian Kenneth V. Costales)*

NTA CANDON *Project Updates*



(Top Photo) **Beef Cattle Production Project.** The Branch Office, headed by OIC Adonis D. Lazo visited farmer-beneficiary Orchidthea Acosta in Tiagan, San Emilio, Ilocos Sur on December 15. Acosta's heifer had already an eight-month old male offspring. (Upper Left Photo) **Improved Tobacco Seedling Production Project.** A total of 36 tobacco seedling growers received their check for the implementation of the Improved Tobacco Seedling Production Project (ITSPP) on November 29. (Lower Left Photo) Branch Administrative Officer V Orlando O. Galdones spearheaded the inventory of ITSPP Nursery of farmer Loreto Cosme in Kalumsing, San Emilio, Ilocos Sur on December 20.



2022 Year-End Convocation and Christmas Party

Text and Photos from the Public Relations Office

NTA held its year-end convocation and annual Christmas Party for all its officials and staff at the BF Homes, Don Antonio Heights in Quezon City on December 7.

The much-awaited fun-filled party for the Central employees was first for Administrator and CEO Belinda S. Sanchez. Former Administrator Robert Victor G. Seares Jr., members of the Governing Board, Branch Managers and other senior officials also graced the event.

Highlights of the daytime activities were four-team competitions on Basketball and fun games and Bingo Games.

The night turned into a Glam Rock Christmas Party for the employees, with employees in their rock star attire enjoying music, dance presentations and raffle draws. ■



Christmas message from Administrator Sanchez



Thanksgiving mass



Dance performance from the Branch Offices



Ceremonial toss of the basketball games



Parlor games



Swimming competition



Best Dressed during the night



Souvenir photo by the pool



NTA Ilocos Norte has started assisting seedling growers to prepare seedbeds and other activities for the Improved Tobacco Seedling Production (ITSP) project in the province. Mae Angela U. Lacamora, Agriculturist II and Area Supervisor, and Nessa Marie Suniga, Agriculturist I, helped seedling grower Dennis Bagaoisan in the preparation of seedbeds for Burley Improved Flavor at his farm in Barangay Casilian in Bacarra, Ilocos Norte on October 14. The seedbeds are expected to provide free tobacco seedlings for 10 hectares. NTA Ilocos Norte has a total of 24 seedling growers this year. (M.A. Lacamora) ■

Pasasalamat sa Isang Tagumpay

Nagpapasalamat po ako sa NTA dahil malaki ang naitulong nila sa aming mga farmers lalo na sa pagbibigay nila sa amin ng 40% subsidy sa *production assistance* na natatanggap namin at dagdag kita na rin ito sa amin. Dahil sa Curing Barn Assistance Project ng NTA, nakapagpatayo ako ng kongkretong kamalig. Laking tulong ito sa amin dahil nagagamit din namin ito na imbakan ng iba pang produkto ng aming sakahan, tulad ng mga gulay. Ang mga gulay ay mula sa iba't ibang *vegetable seeds* na ibinibigay ng NTA mula sa kanilang Vegetable Seed Distribution Program. Salamat NTA management sa walang sawang suporta sa mga maliliit na magsasaka ng tabako. Mabuhay po kayo!



Rosie M. Berio
Farmer Leader
Baraccaoit, Gattaran, Cagayan

